

STARK, BONO MACK, AND CAMP INTRODUCE THE HEALTHY TRANSITIONS ACT

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Bill provides critical support to young adults who fall through the cracks of the mental health system

WASHINGTON, D.C. & Today Congressman Pete Stark (D-CA), Congresswoman Mary Bono Mack (R-CA), and Congressman Dave Camp (R-MI) introduced the Healthy Transitions Act of 2009. The bill will help millions of young adults with a mental illness who fall through the cracks of the mental health system when they transition from youth into adulthood.

"We have an obligation to ensure that young adults with mental illnesses get the treatment they need, and the current system is inadequate," said Rep. Stark. "This bill coordinates our efforts to combat mental illness, to ensure that more young adults make the transition into adulthood without losing critical services."

"Having access to treatment and coordinated care can make all the difference for young people struggling with mental illnesses," said Rep. Bono Mack. "I am proud to join my colleagues in introducing this critical

legislation that will help ensure that kids with mental disorders have access to the treatment and support they need as they seek to live happy, productive lives."

"Regardless of age, dealing with mental illness is a tremendous challenge," said Rep. Camp. "But the Healthy Transitions Act is an important improvement by helping young people transition into adulthood by giving them the necessary treatment options and support network to lead healthy, independent lives."

This bill was authored in response to the findings of a Government Accountability Office (GAO) report from last year, requested by Rep. Stark and then-Sen. Gordon Smith (R-OR). The report detailed the problems that young adults face in finding services that help their transition from youth to adult services.

The report found that 2.4 million young adults had a serious mental illness (SMI) in 2006 — considered an extremely conservative estimate because of the inability to count homeless, institutionalized and incarcerated young adults, groups with high rates of mental illness. They also found that young adults with SMI have difficulty finding services to aid them during their transition to adulthood because services that are available for mental health, housing and employment are not always suited for and directed to young adults. The GAO highlighted the Partnerships for Youth in Transition, a demonstration program run by the Substance Abuse and Mental Health Services Administration (SAMHSA) from 2002-2006, as a model for federal support for this population.

The Healthy Transitions Act of 2009 is modeled on the Partnerships for Youth in Transition demonstration program.

The legislation has three parts:

- Planning Grants to States to develop coordination plans that will give adolescents and young adults with a serious mental health disorder the tools they need to make a healthy transition to adulthood.
- Implementation Grants to States to help states execute these coordination plans. This grant program encourages increasing matching requirements by states to ensure stability in the program.
- A Committee of Federal Partners that will coordinate federal programs that assist adolescents and young adults with mental illness, provide technical assistance to states, and report to Congress.

The Healthy Transitions Act of 2009 is supported by a number of child welfare and mental health stakeholders including the Bazelon Center for Mental Health Law, Child Welfare League of America, American Psychological Association, First Focus, and Mental Health America.

For the full text of the GAO report, please visit: <http://www.gao.gov/new.items/d08678.pdf>

For the bill text, please visit: http://www.stark.house.gov/images/stories/111/legislation/HTA/stark_015final.pdf

For Rep. Stark's floor statement introducing the bill, please visit:
http://www.stark.house.gov/index.php?option=com_content&task=view&id=1287&Itemid=84

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